

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 6, 2019

The Honorable Maxine Waters
Chairwoman
House Financial Services Committee
2129 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mike Crapo
Chairman
Senate Committee on Banking,
Housing and Urban Affairs
534 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Patrick McHenry
Ranking Member
House Financial Services Committee
4340 O'Neill House Office Building
Washington D.C. 20024

The Honorable Sherrod Brown
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Banking,
Housing and Urban Affairs
534 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chairwoman Waters and Chairman Crapo, Ranking Member McHenry and Ranking Member Brown,

We, the undersigned, write to urge the House Financial Services Committee and the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee to expedite consideration and passage of H.R. 1690 and S. 755, the Safe Housing for Families Act, to ensure all families are safe from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning in their homes.

In February, two additional deaths occurred as a result of carbon monoxide poisoning in Section 8 housing in Detroit.ⁱ Already, at least 13 reported deaths related to carbon monoxide poisoning have occurred in public housing since 2003.ⁱⁱ

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, over 50,000 people go to emergency rooms every year due to carbon monoxide poisoning and over 430 people die annually from this silent killer.ⁱⁱⁱ

On March 2, 2019 Senator Tim Scott (R-SC) wrote to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) urging the agency to review the matter^{iv} and on March 25, 2019 HUD issued a notice adding guidance to inspect and collect data on the prevalence of carbon monoxide detection systems at HUD properties.^v Subsequently, HUD issued a statement on April 18, 2019 urging public housing authorities and private property owners of HUD-subsidized housing to install and inspect carbon monoxide monitors. HUD further noted that, “it will propose new regulations to require CO detectors in all HUD-subsidized housing programs nationwide.”^{vi}

Secretary Carson added, “A simple, inexpensive, widely available device can be the difference between life and death. Given the unevenness of state and local law, we intend to make certain

that CO detectors are required in all our housing programs, just as we require smoke detectors, no matter where our HUD-assisted families live.”^{vii}

The support to prevent future deaths from CO poisoning is significant, with demonstrated engagement from the Administration as well as Democratic and Republican Members of the House and Senate.

These senseless deaths in federally-assisted housing are unconscionable. We urge the leadership of the House and Senate committees of jurisdiction to swiftly consider passage of HR 1690 and S. 755, the Safe Housing for Families Act, to ensure public housing facilities across the U.S. are equipped with and maintain functioning carbon monoxide monitors. The most vulnerable among us, the elderly and children living in federally-assisted public housing, deserve safety from preventable CO poisoning.

Sincerely,

Jesús G. “Chuy” García
Member of Congress

Kamala D. Harris
United States Senate

Joe Cunningham
Member of Congress

ⁱ <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/how-many-more-people-have-die-carbon-monoxide-kills-two-n1001146>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/hud-will-start-checking-carbon-monoxide-detectors-won-t-penalize-n988911>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.cdc.gov/features/copoisoning/index.html>

^{iv} <https://www.scott.senate.gov/media-center/press-releases/scott-letter-leads-to-hud-decision-to-prevent-deaths-in-public-housing>

^v <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/5783959-Carbon-Monoxide-Notice-2019-01.html>

^{vi} https://www.hud.gov/press/press_releases_media_advisories/HUD_No_19_051

^{vii} https://www.hud.gov/press/press_releases_media_advisories/HUD_No_19_051